

# CHARITIES ADAPT TO CONTINUE SERVING THOSE IN NEED

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Grieving families are no doubt feeling more isolated than ever before.

"Right now, the reality is that many families aren't capable of accessing grief support," said Deirdre Thomas, executive director of the Oakville-based Lighthouse for Grieving Children, which supports grieving children, youth and their families across Halton.

"Two-thirds of our Lighthouse families are sole parents homeschooling young children and working, so (they) find it challenging to find the time or energy to attend a virtual grief support group. Many are in survival mode, as they are trying to cope alone with little or no support."

Lighthouse is anticipat-

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ing "a surge" in the need for grief support post-pandemic, said Thomas.

As Lighthouse receives no government funding, it relies almost exclusively on fundraising - specifically, the annual Run4Lighthouse, which usually raises \$160,000, a fifth of the revenue needed to keep services free for grieving families, said Thomas.

Due to COVID-19, this year's Run4Lighthouse is being held virtually between now and June 10. The 5KAnyWay virtual run invites the community

to run, walk, bike or swim to complete their 5K. To register, go to [www.run4lh.com](http://www.run4lh.com).

Pre-COVID-19, the Milton Salvation Army food bank might have supported between 18 and 22 households a day, but that took a dramatic turn in April when the number jumped to 35.

Captain Ruth Hickman said the number has dropped to about 25 households a day in May, and is holding steady there.

With no end to the pandemic in sight, Hickman

anticipates that the numbers will rise again and continue "well into 2021."

Because of physical distancing requirements, their staff is small and therefore only limited donations of non-perishable food items can be accommodated, but monetary donations are gratefully welcomed, she said.

To make a donation, visit [www.salvationarmy.ca/donate](http://www.salvationarmy.ca/donate). Canadian Blood Services (CBS) on Brant Street in Burlington is the only permanent blood donor site in Halton and needs in excess of 200 blood donations every week to help meet hospital needs.

Milton, Halton Hills and Oakville rely on mobile clinics, however. With the usual blood donor clinic sites such as schools and rec centres closed, CBS has been urging people to do-

nate at the Burlington site.

The charitable organization has also had to implement health and safety measures by placing donor beds a minimum of six feet apart and limiting the number of people in the centre at a time.

The Georgetown Bread Basket has experienced a 317 per cent increase in new clients between January and April of this year over the same time period in 2019, according to GBB chair Donna Baker. That translates to 71 new households, and includes a 27 per cent increase in the number of children and a 35 per cent increase in food going out the door.

"My projection is that a lot of these people who are coming to our food bank that would never come before, or wouldn't even think about it, they are falling behind. They don't have

enough money; some of them have probably already tapped into their savings."

The food bank is running out of some popular items but recommends people make monetary donations at this time as opposed to drop-offs of non-perishables because of severely limited warehouse space and fewer volunteers to sort.

During the pandemic, GBB is also trying to improve food literacy among its clients with recipe ideas posted to its website ([georgetownbreadbasket.ca](http://georgetownbreadbasket.ca)), particularly for donated items like quinoa, lentils and beans, which are "not generally" favoured, but available.

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: Just as their clients struggle to stay afloat during the financial pressures brought on by the pandemic, so too do the charities that support them.*

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